

Family and Consumer Sciences: a Graduation Requirement

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In many classes students wonder why they need to learn certain information. Many times the actual application of some concepts are very unclear. When was the last time you needed to calculate the circumference of a circle or calculate the volume of a container? You might be interested to know that these mathematical calculations are a regular part of the Family and Consumer Sciences course work. Good afternoon, my name is Rachael Gerstein and I serve as the Vice President of Community Service for New Jersey Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA). Today, I would like to speak to you on behalf of Family and Consumer Sciences and FCCLA.

Family and Consumer Sciences is currently a part of the career education graduation requirement; I think that this graduation requirement is important to a well balanced education. Family and Consumer Science courses teach so many life lessons and skills that lead to career success and help students become more productive citizens. Family and Consumer Sciences focus on the individual, the family, the workplace and the community.

Every student comes to school with a different set of skills from a different background and life style; Family and Consumer Sciences helps to "level the playing field." The lessons taught are useful to everyone; FCS teaches everything from soft skills to career skills to life skills. In addition to helping students manage their resources, Family and Consumer Sciences guides students to master sound environmental practices, analyze nutritional needs, set career goals; learn childcare skills and develop financial literacy. Many everyday topics that are not covered anywhere else are addressed in Family and Consumer Sciences courses.

One important goal for the education system is to graduate students who are independent and productive citizens. Family and Consumer Sciences courses help students become independent and able to care for themselves. For instance, I am privileged enough to have parents who always have a nutritious dinner table and my laundry washed. To be honest, I had no interest in learning the skills needed to create this quality of life. Well, much of this was taught to me by my FCS teacher who made everything interesting and enjoyable. During my foods class a few years ago, it was the first time I boiled water for myself! FCS teaches students how to take care of themselves before they leave the "nest." When I enter college next year, I am confident that Family and Consumer Sciences has taught me the skills that I need to more than survive; I have learned to set goals, form action plans and create a quality of life for myself.

While learning about workplace ethics, money management, childcare, environmental practices and more complex topics, students employ critical thinking process and well as the development of interpersonal communication skills. Critical thinking is an

important part of a classroom that relies on project-based learning. In addition, basic core standards are incorporated into lessons that require the application of relevant mathematics, science and language arts.

It is very difficult to read a newspaper or magazine or watch television and not hear about the importance of nutrition. The connection of nutrition to good health now and in the future is clear. What is not so clear to many is the connection between good nutrition and the need to know how to select and cook food. Our Family and Consumer Sciences teachers understand the health value in mastering food preparation, food selection and storage as well as safety and sanitation. Students are taught about the food pyramid, balanced meals, budgeting to be able to buy good food on any budget, and even how to make nutritional meals with ease. One of my good friends has to be very independent because her mother works late; before she had her FCS course, she never ate a balanced meal. With the help of her FCS class, she is able to make simple, balanced meals for herself and her family. My friend and her mother know how difficult it is to manage work and family. These skills are necessary for all working families and are taught in our Family and Consumer Sciences Classes.

Another extremely important topic for all teenagers that is covered in Family and Consumer Sciences classes is financial literacy. Financial literacy is intricate to resources management that is covered in FCS courses. Students are taught to budget and save their money. By learning how to save my money, I was able to buy items for myself and not rely on my parents for everything; and I learned to not just buy, but comparison shop and to look for quality and "bargains" whenever possible. Students are also taught the practical side of money management by learning how to write out checks and balance their checkbook, as well as how to save their pennies with a no fee savings account or compare the interest on a certificate of deposit. All of this is necessary for a stable future.

In closing, Family and Consumer Sciences is very important as a graduation requirement. It teaches students so many lessons that will be useful throughout their lives. I am grateful to the New Jersey Board of Education for having the foresight to include Family and Consumer Sciences in the Graduation Requirement. I urge this Board to continue to encourage more students to enroll in Family and Consumer Sciences courses so that more students will be prepared for their future.